ANAGRAMS AND ANTIGRAMS: AN ANTIGRAM

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The two short essays below are transposals of each other (that is, each can be formed by rearranging the letters in the other). More precisely, they are antigrams, since one is an essay on anagrams and the other is an essay on the opposite topic, antigrams.

In addition, a large portion (about 75 per cent) of the text of each essay consists of an example. The anagram essay contains an anagram of Shakespeare's Sonnet 33, and the antigram essay gives an antigram of his Sonnet 63. This might be called a two-level recursive transposal--a transposal in which each of the two texts contains trans-posal pairs.

The two Shakespeare sonnets are, of course, not made from the same pile of letters. This inherent mismatch is doubled by the fact that each essay includes its sonnet twice, once as is and once as an anagram. It is the responsibility of the other 25 per cent of the text in each essay to undo this mismatch in letter distribution and bring the two essays into perfect anagrammatical harmony.

ANAGRAMS

The anagram is a beautiful and jovial word recreation by which the letters of one piece of prose are rearranged by a person into another whose essence follows the original very closely (at least, in the best of all worlds). By way of an example, here is the lovely "Sonnet Thirty-Three" of the oft-hailed English bard, Shakespeare:

Full many a glorious morning have I seen,
Flatter the mountain tops with sovereign eye;
Kissing with golden face the meadows green;
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy:
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride,
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace:
Even so my sun one early morn did shine,
With all triumphant splendour on my brow,
But out alack, he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.

Yet him for this, my love no whit disdaineth,
Suns of the world may stain, when heaven's sun staineth.

Now here is an anagram of it, fashioned by that jovial scribbler, Mike K.

Ah, several vivid daybreaks have I known
Infusing ice and snow with glossy sheen,
Summoning swallows to the hills o'er-grown,
Suffusing soil with sunny velveteen.
Yet swift may come the dour and dimming moon,
In pride to scheme, to now with gloom enshroud,
And fast as light-heeled Mercury, may soon
Eclipse the sun, throw shadows on the ground.
Today I met pure Sun's fine ring of fire,
And, humble, knelt amid the calm rays there;
But swerving Moon eclipsed my Sun entire,
To hold one epoch in that rare lake air.
I care not what false height that beam attaineth:
This soul shall yet remain, while light remaineth.

ANTIGRAMS

The antigram is an awesome type of comic work where a common, lowly motto (or one's pretty, weepy poem) is turned into another nice letter set (oft with a damaged meter, if a hard poem) with an opposite sense. So, e.g., the sixty-third fourteen-line poem that old William S. emoted commences

Against my love shall be as I am now
With Time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn
When hours have drained his blood and filled his brow
With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn
Hath travelled on to age's steepy night,
And all those beauties whereof now he's king
Are vanishing, or vanished out of sight,
Stealing away the treasure of his spring:
For such a time do I now fortify
Against confounding age's cruel knife,
That he shall never cut from memory
My sweet love's beauty, though my lover's life.
His beauty shall in these black lines be seen,
And they shall live, and he in them still green.

Look now, in awe, at one correct and comely antigram poem (not written by Mr. Martin Gardner; rather, M. Keith's poetic company secretary):

I see my husband shining in his youth
With sober, loving heart and honor fair;
He hastens to my side with song of truth
And flagons cold, my breast to now ensnare.
Mankind, amid the hubbub (hearts of light,
That never break nor shake nor feel life's weight)
Laughs so. The hours and seconds fly by night,
Thence, palate teased, we seek our honored mate.
I wail against all flesh, fame, sinful wiles:
How selfishly we have survival's will!
Our inner fire may live unchanged a while,
Yet, ever in decline, we groan downhill.
And though this poem strives against cruel Time,
Love, you shall die anon--just so this rhyme.

"IN XANADU DID KUBLA KHAN..."

Word Ways does not ordinarily review books of literary criticism, but an exception is made for this one because the author has contributed various short articles to Word Ways in the past. Robert Fleissner's *Sources, Meaning, and Influences of Coleridge's Kubla Khan* is published by Mellen Press for $89.95 (ISBN 0-7734-7718-7). Some appreciation of the scholarship that has gone into his analysis of Coleridge's famous poem can be gleaned from the following excerpt: "Samuel Taylor Coleridge's nonce spelling *Xannadù* in the Crewe manuscript for "Kubla Khan, or a Fragment in a Dream," corrected or respelled *Xanadu* in the printed version in 1816, deserves a bit more linguistic consideration. The question is: did it derive from *Purchas His Pilgrimage* alone, or from Purchas in combination with Milton, as J.B. Beer has claimed? If the latter, was the word in Purchas *Xamdu*, as Beer proposes, or rather *Xaindu*, as in the first and second editions of the *Pilgrimage* (the leading source)? Although the Purchas-Milton combination would appeal (Coleridge being strongly indebted to *Paradise Lost*), the spelling in the earlier editions does seem preferable--if only because its usage there would involve little more than simple juxtaposition at the time the name was finally transformed and became *Xanadu*..."